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ABSTRACT

Despite problems of growth, the newness of junior colleges permits activities that might otherwise be stifled by tradition. It fits the trend toward making education relevant to individual community needs. It can make improvement of education a continuing process by doing research on how to facilitate learning and applying it to teacher training and curriculum. Linked to an area's economic life, the college can use the creativity of business and industry. It can coordinate community action programs with its own remedial and work-study programs, as in making a neighborhood reading clinic part of its literacy project or combining teacher training with day-care centers. Accommodating, as it does, adult education, vocational training, and academic preparation, it has many chances for innovation. Connecting the public school system, higher education, industry, and private fund sources, it is a natural spot for fiscal experiments. New laws aim to let the college coordinate and support diverse agencies, not overlap or compete with them. They will provide grants to individual schools for career education programs. The open door is a primary service to the poor, giving immediate job training with a chance for later transfer to professional work. The federal plans will encourage coordination with government manpower programs, with feeder high schools, and with 4-year schools. Full use of the junior college can reduce the artificial separation of the academic, economic, and social worlds. (HH)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND THE OFFICE OF EDUCATION'S GOALS

Address by James E. Allen, Jr.*
Assistant Secretary for Education
and
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I am sure you all recognize yourselves as part of the largest growth industry in American education today. Statistics on the schools you represent are never up to date -- you are always moving ahead of the predictions about numbers of institutions, numbers of enrollments, numbers and kinds of projects undertaken.

Today, two-year colleges serve about two million students -- three times the 1960 count. This year, almost as many freshmen entered junior colleges as entered four-year institutions.

These figures are heavy with implications of power and responsibility for you. As the president of one junior college has said, the Nation has gone from knowing little about community colleges and caring less to expecting them to solve all the problems of society.

Even if we temper enthusiasm with realism, however, the opportunities and challenges confronting the community college are extraordinary. As relative newcomers to the educational scene, most of you are struggling with the problems of beginning. You are doing things for the first time, organizing your resources, and creating the organizational framework in which you will operate.

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The pressures for swift action make these processes all the harder. Yet, the very newness of the average community college is among its strong points. As yet uncluttered by tradition, you have the freedom to strike out in new directions. With the flexibility of youth, you can try unproven strategies without having to disentangle yourselves from "the way things have always been done."

It is because of your newness, your freedom from the weight of tradition, that you can make the community college a prime instrument in the realization of the goals my office hopes to pursue. To begin with, just about every attribute of the community college fits in with recognized needs for making American education more relevant to the actual needs of the individual community.

One of these goals is to make the improvement of education a continuing process. This means we must have research about what works and doesn't work in facilitating the learning process. Then we need ways of translating research discoveries into teacher training and curriculum materials, and, finally, of making sure appropriate people in the educational system have access to them.

Your community colleges, with their occupational education and manpower training programs, have special links with the economic life of the community. You are not locked into an exclusively academic frame of reference. You can avail yourself of the creativity of business and industry as it relates to teaching and learning.

Because so many of your students are from low-income groups, you are also within reach of other centers of creativity in education -- the community action programs -- programs where disadvantaged people are exploring unorthodox approaches to self-help and where they are developing new patterns of mutual help in education. Receptivity to work-study arrangements and to community service projects is characteristic of the community college, and here, too, new avenues for the discovery of needs and possibilities in education open up, particularly the recognition of variations in learning style as well as variations in background and experience.

The community college with its capacity for accommodating many kinds of programs at the same time -- everything from adult education to vocational training to straight academic preparation -- can try many novel patterns. It can make the promising arrangements an official part of its operations -- for example, making a neighborhood reading clinic a part of a formalized literacy program, or bringing together teacher training projects and local day care centers for young children.

The role of the community college in institutionalizing experiment and evaluation in education is a natural adjunct of what it can do toward another essential goal of redressing the educational handicaps of the disadvantaged. The particularly large representation of ethnic minorities, as well as of low-income people, in community colleges presents the challenge squarely; the opportunity for finding out how to surmount the special problems of such people looms equally large.

Still another goal of particular concern to us in the Office of Education has to do with ways and means. We are groping for new patterns of support for education -- new channels for bringing Federal dollars into the educational process, and also fresh approaches to non-Federal governmental resources.

Here again, the community college is in the vanguard. As the crossroads institution, tying in with the public school system and with public and private institutions of higher education, as well as with industry and other private revenue sources, the community college is the natural proving ground for experiments in educational financing. We are already seeing novel forms of collaboration between business and government in this area. The community college is already beginning to perform unique liaison functions between education and the surrounding society. I expect there will be many more as the urgency of the work community colleges are doing is more widely acknowledged.

Federal recognition of the importance of the community college to the national effort at revitalization of the entire educational system can be seen in the fact that I have a newly appointed special assistant for community college affairs. It is also apparent in the new legislation now being prepared.

The new legislation is being designed to help community colleges in two major ways: first, by direct aid to colleges improving their career education programs, particularly as they expand opportunities for the disadvantaged, and, second, by aid to the States in improving their management of career education.

Beginning with Fiscal Year 1971, under plans now being discussed, States would be eligible for grants to develop plans for expanded post-secondary career education systems. Depending on the individual State situation, such a plan might call for augmentation of the number of institutions offering career education -- new community colleges, for example -- or it might provide for further development of existing institutions and programs along these lines.

Acceptable State plans might also include provision for corporate colleges (colleges of continuing education for those now employed in industry) and colleges for craftsmen -- by which we mean courses on or off campus, which build on technical skills in preparing workers for posts in management and advanced technology.

Among the criteria for State plans would be their effectiveness as coordinating mechanisms. One objective would be to use the plans to make the diverse activities of manpower, poverty and education agencies on all levels of government part of a coherent program. In this way each agency's program would be supportive of the other. This would avoid the confusion of overlapping and competitive activities that all too often diminish rather than enhance each agency's effectiveness.

In the coordinating effort, there would be conscious use of the community college as a stabilizing and correlating mechanism. To receive a grant, a State would have to maintain an appropriately representative body to take on this work of coordination. Such a body should include the representation of all State agencies concerned with post-secondary career education, including the State vocational education agency, the State agency or agencies responsible for higher education, public education and other human resource development agencies, both public and private. Where there is a separate body dealing with community college affairs, representation from such an agency should, of course, also be included. The principal State officer charged with operating or planning responsibilities for community college affairs might possibly be chairman. Such decisions should be the province of the States.

These plans are all very much in the making as yet. My staff and I have been meeting with State community college officials to make the legislation more responsive to local realities. I have already had talks with some of you, and my assistant will be meeting with you tomorrow to discuss the special problems of your individual States. It is obvious that we must look to you for detailed information about the community college situation before we can arrive at an appropriate relationship. I hope you will be candid in your reactions and suggestions.

In approaching the problem through the States in this way, we at the Federal level are trying to get past one of our greatest difficulties, which has been to find a support formula that is equally useful for the many very different situations that exist in different parts of the country. The most difficult task has been to devise for the delivery of the Federal dollar to community colleges a system flexible enough to accommodate the multiplicity of demands to be met.

I should hasten to add, however, that our problems in arriving at such mechanisms are no temptation to us to try to standardize the educational picture in the interests of simplified management. Everywhere in American education, diversity has been the source of strength. In the world of community colleges, sensitivity to critical local needs and the inventiveness that communities exercise in meeting these needs are basic to their role.

To go on with what we want the proposed legislation to do: We want to institute a system of grants to individual institutions to start, develop, or improve any activities affecting career education. Activities eligible for support would include new curriculum development, hiring and training of staff for career guidance and counseling, hiring and training and retraining of faculty, (including those for career education programs), cooperative arrangements with industry for work opportunities and for using corporate employees as teachers and similar projects.

Support will be provided for special efforts made by the community college to work closely with its own feeder secondary schools to develop new modes of college preparatory curriculum. Joint guidance for the secondary school and the community college systems and new curriculum relationships with senior colleges would further integrate the system for maximum career growth.

To qualify, a community college would, first of all, have to guarantee a policy of open admission to all students capable of benefiting from its programs. This is a key criterion which must be interpreted from broad perspectives. One of the great virtues of the community college lies in its open door -- open to the poor, to the person of limited educational background and limited capacity for performance on standardized tests, as well as to the peron of convential qualifications.

This open door is one of our greatest hopes of using the community college as a primary vehicle for service to the disadvantaged. Already, your institutions are bringing unprecedented numbers of minority group people into post-secondary education. In virtually every large American city, for example, more blacks study at public community colleges than all nearby institutions combined. A quarter of all black collegians are enrolled in public two-year colleges in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles.

It is our hope that Indians, Mexican-Americans, and rural whites will be represented in community colleges in appropriate proportions. As we continue to expand the financial and academic accessibility of the community colleges, we must also extend the geographical accessibility. Community colleges are now within reach of all but 30 large American cities. However, for many Indians and other rural people the supply is still not as great as we want it to be to reach our objective of practical opportunities for higher education for all.

Besides the open door, Federal criteria for aid to individual community colleges would include a policy for facilitating student transfer between occupational and academic programs and between vocational and career education programs. We want community college education to stay open-ended. We think it not only should but can deal with the immediacies of job training without closing off the options for further academic work. This concept is particularly relevant in working with programs directed toward the disadvantaged who need the reality of career education to reconnect with learning and the option of professional development when such reconnections succeed. Many of you have already developed close ties with secondary vocational education and recognize the validity of such programs for continued technical training.

Many of your schools are already pioneering in the use of work-study programs for the mutual reinforcement of practical skills with theoretical knowledge, and of theoretical knowledge with its on-the-job applicability. This approach is consistent with the aims of vocational education, preserving also the possibility of opportunity for further academic education.

Applications for grants will also be judged in terms of their awareness of the possibilities for dovetailing with other relevant education programs and facilities. In all our contemporary efforts at social change, we have found ourselves handicapped by failures of connection among people and programs directed at the same objectives but all too often working at cross purposes. Sometimes it represents failures of communication -- organizations do not know what is going on outside their own areas of activity; they are not aware of resources they could use. Sometimes, it is a matter of empire-building and rivalries between institutions.

As I am sure you are aware, community colleges are by no means invulnerable to these forms of corporate myopia. Because we feel so strongly that the liaison function of the community college is among its highest potentialities, we want to set up a system of incentives to encourage coordination with Government manpower development and education programs, with feeder secondary schools on the one hand and with full-scale universities on the other.

You are all undoubtedly asking yourselves how much money the Administration is ready to allocate to community colleges under the proposed legislation.

I am afraid I cannot give you a very precise answer. The new funds which would be provided by this legislation would be chiefly "glue money" to tie together the host of existing State, Federal and private activities concerned with human resource development.

However, let me make it clear that the intent is not to strengthen one part of education by weakening another. The intent is to redirect funds -- much of it now outside the Office of Education -- to the community college.

Even though final formulas of support have yet to be worked out, the national will to give your institutions the backing they need, is, I think, firm. Your contributions to the central social efforts of our time -- contributions you are already making, and contributions within your power to make in the future -- are so great that it can scarcely be otherwise.

Continuing education for adults -- new careers for the retired, and for women either returning to the labor force or entering it for the first time after years of homemaking -- the development of vocational skills for people of all ages, from the householder learning to make home repairs on a do-it-yourself basis to the grandmother taking up French -- these, too, are educational assignments for the community college.

Veterans' education is another area of challenge and opportunity for the community college. Most separation centers are within reach of community college facilities for the returning serviceman ready for realistic counseling about his own community college. Work-study programs which involve earning as well as learning, are likely to attract the veteran whose age and family responsibilities make him hesitate to undertake formal study under other circumstances. And here again, variations in educational background need not keep the ex-serviceman out of the community college as they might from other educational institutions.

We in the Office of Education appreciate the kind of problems you face in trying to organize for the obligations society has heaped upon you. We know that along with the money problems there are the problems of organizational instability to hinder your efforts -- tendencies in both staff and student body to leave as fast as they arrive, uncertainties in relationships with government and industry, and all the rest. Yet there is, I believe, in your enterprise a momentum so great as to surmount all these difficulties.

The community college of today and tomorrow, going beyond its specific educational role, can be one of our most valuable resources for helping to solve the larger problems of our society.

It can help to reinstitute the sense of community so often lost in the development of megalopolis, to redefine our values in matters of work, career, and social service, to break down the artificial barriers that have grown up between institutions, which so often separate the academic, economic, and social worlds from each other in artificial ways that hamper the productivity of all.

This is indeed a large order. The progress already made augers well for filling it and I pledge my full cooperation in the tasks in which you are engaged. The potential of the community college for the improvement of educational opportunity and for the advancement of our Nation is so great that nothing must be allowed to hinder its realization.